THE

DRAMATIC PUFFERS,

A

PRELUDE;

AS PERFORMED

AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL

IN

COVENT-GARDEN.

LONDON:

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M.DCC.LXXXII.

BRITISH MUSEUM

CHARACTERS.

ZEPHYR, — — — Mr. EDWIN,

BREEZE, — — — Mr. ROBSON,

AUTHOR, — — — — Mr. LEE LEWES.

CHARACTERS.

THE

DRAMATIC PUFFERS,

SCENE. The Stage.

Enter ZEPHYR and BREEZE, meeting.

ZEPHYR.

BY this light but it is—What! Bill Breeze!

BREEZE.

Ah! my gentle Zephyr! *(ſhaking hands)* Why, where have you hid yourſelf? — But I beg pardon—

ZEPHYR.

Oh, I make no ſecret of my ſituations; I've been obliged to lodge for a few weeks on the other ſide of the water; it was forcibly recommended to me by a doctor well ſkilled in conſumptive caſes. *(quaintly.)*

BREEZE.

BREEZE.

And you find yourſelf the better for it?

ZEPHYR.

Amazingly; for I've now got rid of all thoſe lurking ſymptoms which are the too frequent attendants on genius, and letters. — So, I find they have had ſome flogging work over both courſes in my abſence: the different ſtuds have been run hard, eh!

BREEZE.

Hard? — *puff'd* all round; — ſcarce a leg to ſtand on!

ZEPHYR.

As the knowing ones have been taken in, you touch'd a little, Breeze, I hope!

BREEZE.

Not a ducat! — No, Zephyr, all my proſpects fell with the *coalition*; — at the beginning of the ſeaſon, indeed, I offered my ſervices *here*; — but I was delicately told — that authors now-a-days took upon themſelves the diſagreeable taſk of *criticizing* their own pieces; and at as to the ordinary buſineſs of the theatre, a gentleman of eſtabliſhed reputation had undertaken to do the whole upon a ſtanding contract!

ZEPHYR.

Ay; I ſuppoſe I ſhould have met with ſimilar neglect on the other ſide of the way, if it had not been for my new invented play-houſe machine.

BREEZE.

Play-houſe machine! a kind of theatrical *Buzaglo*, I ſuppoſe, occaſionally to keep the houſe warm?

ZEPHYR.

(Conceitedly,) Oh, no! you'll never gueſs it;—will you promiſe me the moſt profound ſecrecy?

BREEZE.

'Pon my honour—

ZEPHYR.

(Half whiſpering) Why, then, you muſt know I call it (and I think rather aptly)—I call it—an *Applauder!*

BREEZE.

An Applauder?

ZEPHYR.

Yes, an *Applauder*; a mechanical improvement on the vulgar art of manucuſſion; by which one man, with the ſimple winch of a barrel-organ, ſhall give a more mark'd and judicious applauſe, than can poſſibly be derived from any ſtationary band of hireling clappers!

BREEZE.

Egad that *is* a happy invention!—but pray, Zephyr, wont it tend in ſome meaſure to counteract the *real* plaudits of an impartial audience?

ZEPHYR.

Oh, quite the contrary; for as clapping, like gaping, is nothing more than an involuntary accordance of muſcular motion, I will engage, my dear Breeze,—barring rheumatic and gouty caſes,—to carry every hand on any particular occaſion, in uniſon with my Applauder.

BREEZE.

A very capital idea upon my ſoul!

ZEPHYR.

Beſides, I don't ſee why the benefit of it may not be extended to the performers; then you know the actors and actreſſes of a certain *natural diffidence*, need not ſo often be laid up, by the chilling damps of *ſilent* admiration!

BREEZE.

Certainly my dear friend.—But when will it come out Zephyr?

ZEPHYR.

Almoſt immediately; the firſt eſſay was to have been made on a late *muſical occaſion*; but the author and compoſer, not being able to ſettle which of the parts deſerved the "*moſt deciſive burſts* of *univerſal applauſe*," the machine was laid by, and the matter left as uſual to the deciſion of hands.

BREEZE.

And ſo you are come here, I ſuppoſe to offer it alſo to this Houſe?

ZEPHYR.

Oh, no, I have convey'd away the *copy-right*; and the managers of both Theatres are now contending for an excluſive patent.

BREEZE.

Ha! ha! ha! Do you do any thing in the *parliatary* way now, Zephyr?

ZEPHYR.

Not a *metaphor!* that branch fell to nothing when gentlemen firſt ſubmitted to the fatigue of carrying their *own* FLOWERS to *market!* — No, having a little

 leiſure

leiſure upon my hands, the prompter ſaid he would recommend me as diurnal colouriſt to the young author of this night's piece.

BREEZE.

That's droll enough! why, I am waiting here myſelf in hopes of procuring a ſimilar employ.

ZEPHYR.

Indeed! why, then, if that's the caſe, ſuppoſe we conduct the matter jointly, and ſhare the profits?

BREEZE.

With all my heart: — ſo, if you'll undertake to waft him through the pacific ocean of the mininiſterial prints, I'll engage — but ſoft; here, I fancy, comes the young author;—and a *martial* one I ſee by his appearance.

Enter AUTHOR, in an officer's uniform, *(looking round.)*

AUTHOR.

It's ſtrange I ſhould never be able to catch thoſe ſcene-painting gentry!—*Wild* ſaid they would meet me here at half paſt five; *(looking at his watch)* I fear

I fear we ſhall not arrange the ſcene for the laſt act before the piece begins — *(they advance)* Oh, gentlemen, I'm glad we've met at laſt.

ZEPHYR.

Mr. Wild, Sir, I take it for granted —

AUTHOR.

Yes; but he ſays we've not a moment to loſe!

BREEZE.

True, Sir, I thought you'd be in a hurry, ſo we took care to be prepared.

AUTHOR.

I'm glad of it; and how do you intend —

ZEPHYR.

Why, Sir, as it's a firſt attempt, and times are tickliſh, I don't think it adviſeable to give any thing too highly colour'd at preſent, and therefore I have ſketch'd ſomething in the oblique way, which I conceive however will have a fine effect.

AUTHOR.

AUTHOR.

I underſtand you; in the *ſide wing* way; but in that caſe how ſhall we diſplay the performers to advantage?

ZEPHYR.

Oh, dear Sir, never fear them; they are able, and willing enough to take care of themſelves!

BREEZE.

Well, for my part, I think there is nothing like a good bold outline at once, to take in the *flats*.

AUTHOR.

Well gentlemen, I'm indifferent whether the ſcene be a *flat*, or an *oblique* one, provided its effect be ſtrikingly convey'd to the galleries.

BREEZE.

Oh, lud Sir, make yourſelf perfectly eaſy on that ſcore;—my deſigns *(pulling out his papers)* are calculated for all claſſes; *(gives him one)* there Sir, juſt run your eye over that; I think that will reach the *Gods*, or the *Devil*'s in it!

AUTHOR.

AUTHOR.

(Reads) " A new conſtellation of reſplendent " brilliancy, illumin'd the theatrical hemiſphere laſt " night; the dramatic magi" — *(in amazement)* What am I to underſtand by this?

ZEPHYR.

(Giving one of his papers) Probably, Sir, you'll like that better, from the delicacy of the *keeping*.

AUTHOR.

(Reads) " The genius of comedy perhaps never " was ſo illuſtriouſly diſplay'd" — Why, what the devil is all this, gentlemen?

BREEZE.

Lud, Sir, don't you know? why, *puffs* to be ſure; — puffs, and as good as any *home made ones* — that you'll find in the circle of your dramatic friends, depend on't.

AUTHOR.

AUTHOR.

Puffs?—

ZEPHYR.

Yes, *puffs*, Sir: an airy inſinuating kind of ſyſtem, which, though generally deſpis'd, is more generally practis'd; that has the addreſs to baffle the whole *five ſenſes*, and carry all its points in ſpite of conviction!

AUTHOR.

Indeed! is that the caſe?

BREEZE.

To be ſure, Sir!

ZEPHYR.

No doubt, Sir:—it's what may be emphatically termed the *foil-ſtone of fame*; which, like the mock jewel of the ſtage, never fails to out-glare the modeſt ſparkling diamond!—

AUTHOR.

And pray, gentlemen, to whom am I indebted for theſe ſingular obligations? — Your name, if you pleaſe?

BREEZE.

My name! Breeze, Sir; I'm not aſham'd of my name. *(pertly)* — Billy Breeze, No. 300, at the *braſs knocker*, *Air*-ſtreet, Piccadilly.

AUTHOR.

And your's, worthy Sir?

ZEPHYR.

Zephyr, Sir, at your ſervice.

AUTHOR.

And are not you, Meſſrs. Zephyr and Breeze, a congenial couple of pitiful paraſites?

BREEZE.

Lud, Sir!

AUTHOR.

Fly hence, ye raſcally retailers of ill founded reputation! and by that means ſave your bones: — how-however humble my genius may prove, know, that it ſcorns to ſoar upon the wretched pinion of Grub-ſtreet Proſtitution!

ZEPHYR.

Sir, This is no place, Sir — no place — but we'll find one, depend on't —

BREEZE.

Yes, Sir, — we'll tickle —

(He drives them out.

Enter PROMPTER's BOY.

BOY.

The ſcene for the laſt act is ſettled; ſo, if you pleaſe, Sir, we'll ring in.

AUTHOR.

By all means. *(Exit Boy.)*

(The author ſteps forward to ſpeak the Prologue.)

THE

PROLOGUE.

BRITISH MUSEUM

THE PROLOGUE.

Spoken by Mr. LEE LEWES.

CALL'D forth Thalia's ſtandard to diſplay,
And here maintain her ſov'reign comic ſway;
As Chief — I'll reconnoitre well the ground,
To learn what hoſtile lines are drawn around!
[*Surveys the Houſe with a Glaſs.*

That's not a dark defile in yonder glade? —
For ſhou'd it prove a treach'rous ambuſcade,
No *puffing* miners have I here in pay,
To ſap their works, or turn their covert-way;
No mercenary band who have been wont,
To hack and hew, like pioneers in front!

With flying ſhells our engineers ſhall try,
That well mann'd battlement which tow'rs ſo high!
[*Pointing to the Upper Gallery.*

Beneath, our point-blank-ſhot will ſurely reach,
And in yon half-moon batt'ry make a breach!
[*To the Second Gallery.*

Thoſe

Thoſe lovely breaſt-works that adorn the field,
To nature's gentle ſummons ſoon muſt yield!
[*Side Boxes, &c.*

This poſt advanc'd the piquet guard to keep,
And that reſerve, who are entrench'd chin-deep,
We hope to carry by a bold exertion,
At leaſt amuſe, with ſome well plann'd diverſion!
[*To the Pit.*

My troops are vet'rans: — it has been their lot,
To form in front of ſervice hiſſing hot;
Who, when their ranks are gall'd, or put to flight,
Are ſure to rally, and renew the fight,
Unleſs — and then no light dragoons ſcour fleeter —
Their powder fails for want of true ſalt-petre!
Our plan's avow'd; it is from this firm ſtation,
To gain the heights of public approbation!

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THE END.